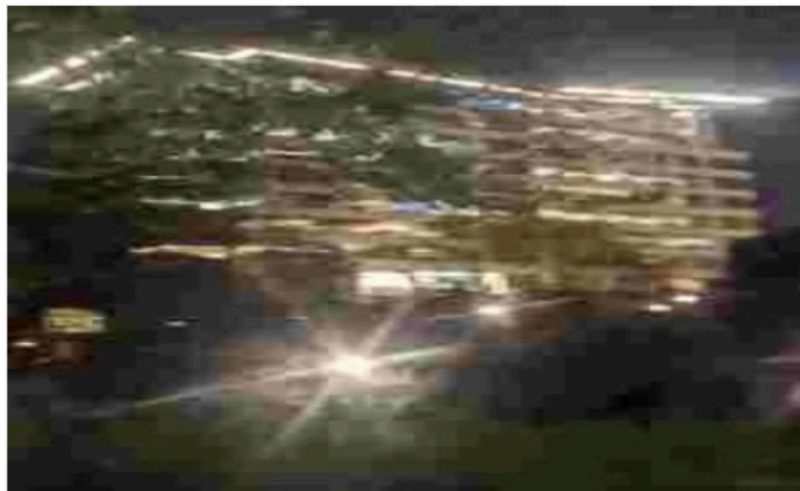


# The Poor Image Framework



Originally authored by Tempest Britt

**“Art. Art and only arts give solace to all this chaos and lonely hearts.”**  
**- Mc Paul Barman**

## On the Poor Image

In the opening paragraphs of her 2009 article “*In Defense of the Poor Image*”, Hito Steyerl describes the titular poor image as follows:

“The poor image is a copy in motion. Its quality is bad, its resolution substandard. As it accelerates, it deteriorates. It is a ghost of an image, a preview, a thumbnail, an errant idea, an itinerant image distributed for free, squeezed through slow digital connections, compressed, reproduced, ripped, remixed, as well as copied and pasted into other channels of distribution.

“Poor images are the contemporary Wretched of the Screen, the debris of audiovisual production, the trash that washes up on the digital economies’ shores. They testify to the violent dislocation, transferrals, and displacement of images—their acceleration and circulation within the vicious cycles of audiovisual capitalism. Poor images are dragged around the globe as commodities or their effigies, as gifts or as bounty. They spread pleasure or death threats, conspiracy theories or bootlegs, resistance or stultification. Poor images show the rare, the obvious, and the unbelievable—that is, if we can still manage to decipher it.

“The image is liberated from the vaults of cinemas and archives and thrust into digital uncertainty... The poor image tends towards abstraction: it is a visual idea in its very becoming.”

For an image (work of art) to be considered poor it must: A) Be freely accessible by any member of the public, B) Have been changed from its original self, and C) Be of substandard quality compared to traditionally lauded works in a similar medium.

It is my goal to establish an artistic dogma based on this understanding of the poor image.

## **Prestige and quality**

The poor image is not a spectacle. It does not exist to dazzle the eye. It has the potential for beauty, but it exists primarily to relay a message. Through the process of sharing, compressing, and editing the message of a poor image will change. Meanings will be reinterpreted. They will be repurposed. This is the fundamental concept that a contemporary artist must understand when interacting with a digital landscape.

The internet is a data sharing tool. When data is shared it becomes fully accessible by the digital public. Without access to the public a work cannot be considered poor imagery, as it has no ability to be shared freely.

The quality of the poor image must be understood in a different context than those of money, prestige, galleries and black ties. The quality of a poor image derives from its very lack of prestige. It is overlooked because it has been passed through, and subsequently affected by, the masses.

The quality and potential for beauty lies in the artifacts of human interaction. A poor image inherently references its own form of dissemination. It cannot exist without critique, degradation, or editing. These factors lead to a beautiful texture that relies on community for conception. This very texture is what supposedly devalues poor images to the world of artistic traditionalists. Tradition says the less texture, the more valuable. This notion is wrong. Less texture only makes way for more prestige. This is why prestige should be avoided by artists working under the poor image dogma.



Prestige represents nothing material. It is a denotation of construct. Prestige does not observe material. Rather, it seeks to arbitrarily classify and segregate material. We reject the segregation of art based on non-observational constructs. Art should not be presented in a context in which value is prescribed to it. Art should be freely accessible, reproducible, editable, and explorable.

# **Radical Opportunity**

The poor image yields much opportunity for anti-traditionalist communication when presented in a radical context. Because its texture is not valuable to artistic capitalist institutions it stands in defiance of artistic profit. Poor images are forged through interaction. This interaction opens images up to be tools of revolution. The message that a poor image carries can usually only be deciphered by someone who understands the means by which the image was degraded and changed. Hence, the poor image acts as a type of code.

The code of the poor image is not as simple as artistic abstraction. There is no single author who codes the work. A vast networks of individuals, languages, cultures interact with and affect the image. Only those who understand the history that has influenced the image can understand its code. Many times, a poor image can only be partially analyzed by its viewer. Without holistic understanding of a work's specific lineage any analysis will be incomplete. Because of this, the poor image necessitates dialogue between viewers. This necessity of interaction makes revolutionary messages easier to code, and forces viewers into a deeper understanding of a work.

Not only are poor images a more easily codable form of art. The revolutionary aspects and messages of a poor image are rooted more in material than those of a traditional work. For example: Terry Gilliam's "*Brazil*" is chocked full of revolutionary rhetoric. However, any discussion of that rhetoric is based in any viewer's understanding of Gilliam as an author. The only material source to confirm an analysis is Gilliam himself. For the poor image, however, any analysis can be proven or disproven by tracing the lineage of

itself. Following an image backwards through its history of digital interaction will almost perfectly illuminate its rhetoric. Therefore, with a more scientific and historical form of analysis a solid, material, factual message can be reaped from poor images.

The nebulous “death of the author” laden discussions that surround traditional art are not useless. It’s through just such discussions that we learn about ourselves. However, poor image authors die a different death. Their works materially do not belong to them. They have no claim over their works after publication. Their works belong to history. It’s exactly that history that allows poor images the opportunity to carry rich, factual, revolutionary statements. And it is exactly those statements that make the poor image such an important tool for radical revolutionary communication.

## **Reaction and Reference**

The poor image author is necessarily reactionary. The poor image cannot exist in a vacuum. It's creation can only come from & act as a reaction.

These reactions, more often than not, can be seen through direct and indirect referencing. A poor image is made of referential building blocks. Pieces of rhetoric and imagery are cut out of their place of origin and permanently pasted into their new homes. Since poor images bear no profit, copyright laws are completely meaningless and therefore forgotten. Left behind like like chains that no longer fit.

The direct referencing visible in the poor image is illegal in America and many other places. This criminalization further highlights such images' revolutionary potential. If your government has outlawed a means of artistic expression it is fearful of what may come from that art.

In the 1970s George Jackson described a contemporary syllogism made up of a major and minor premise. The major being a militaristic people's vanguard. The minor being the vast array of underground artistic communities that exist primarily in America's urban centers. For the conclusion of these two groups to be reached both must work together towards a common goal. As artists of the minor premise we must recognize the utility of the poor image as a form of massive coded communication.

People interact with poor images daily without realizing it. If we as artists use the poor image in a disciplined and purposeful way, we can raise a new artistic consciousness. The poor image is already understood by most people who interact with the internet. We must start using our artistic abilities as filmmakers, musicians, disc jockeys, digital artists, graphic designers, etc. to further expand and elaborate on the poor image.

It is through working in the poor image framework, and through the dialogue and interaction inherent to it, that we can reach the synthesis of class struggle in art.

**Goodbye to artistic exclusivity.  
Long live freedom of expression!**

## **Dogma**

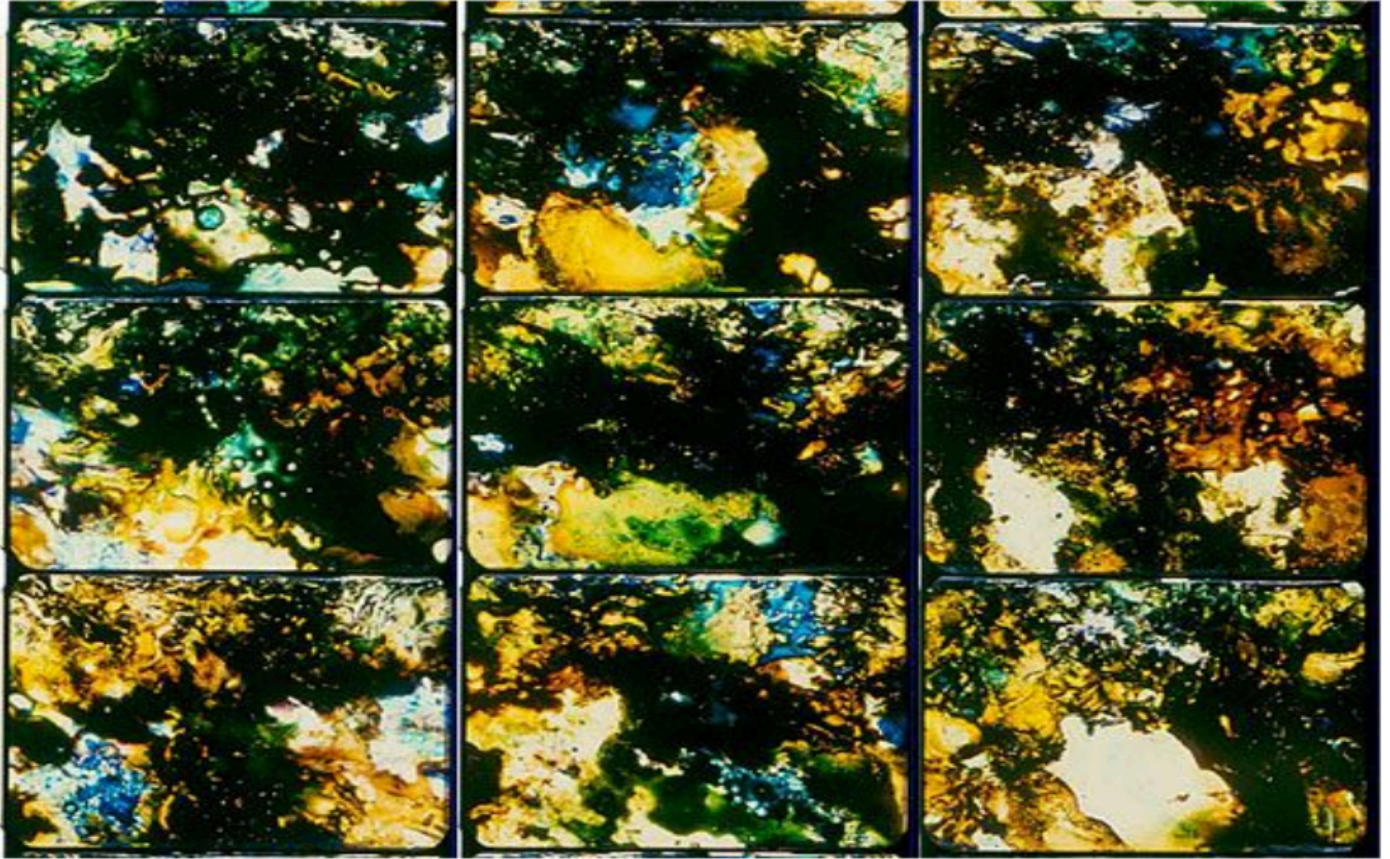
1. Once an author's work has been published, it no longer belongs to them.
2. Low compression and high quality should be avoided.
3. All works created must be accessible for free either in person or offline.
4. Works must be interacted with, changed, and republished at least once. (By the original author or another person.)





## **Gallery**

Many of the images and sequences featured here are humorous in nature. This is because of the current understanding of poor images' ability to carry meaningful messages. I ask you readers to understand that these images carry valuable rhetoric. Humor is simply the social medium they exist in. Do not ignore the messages in these images because of their comedic nature.



Poor images existed even before digital compression.

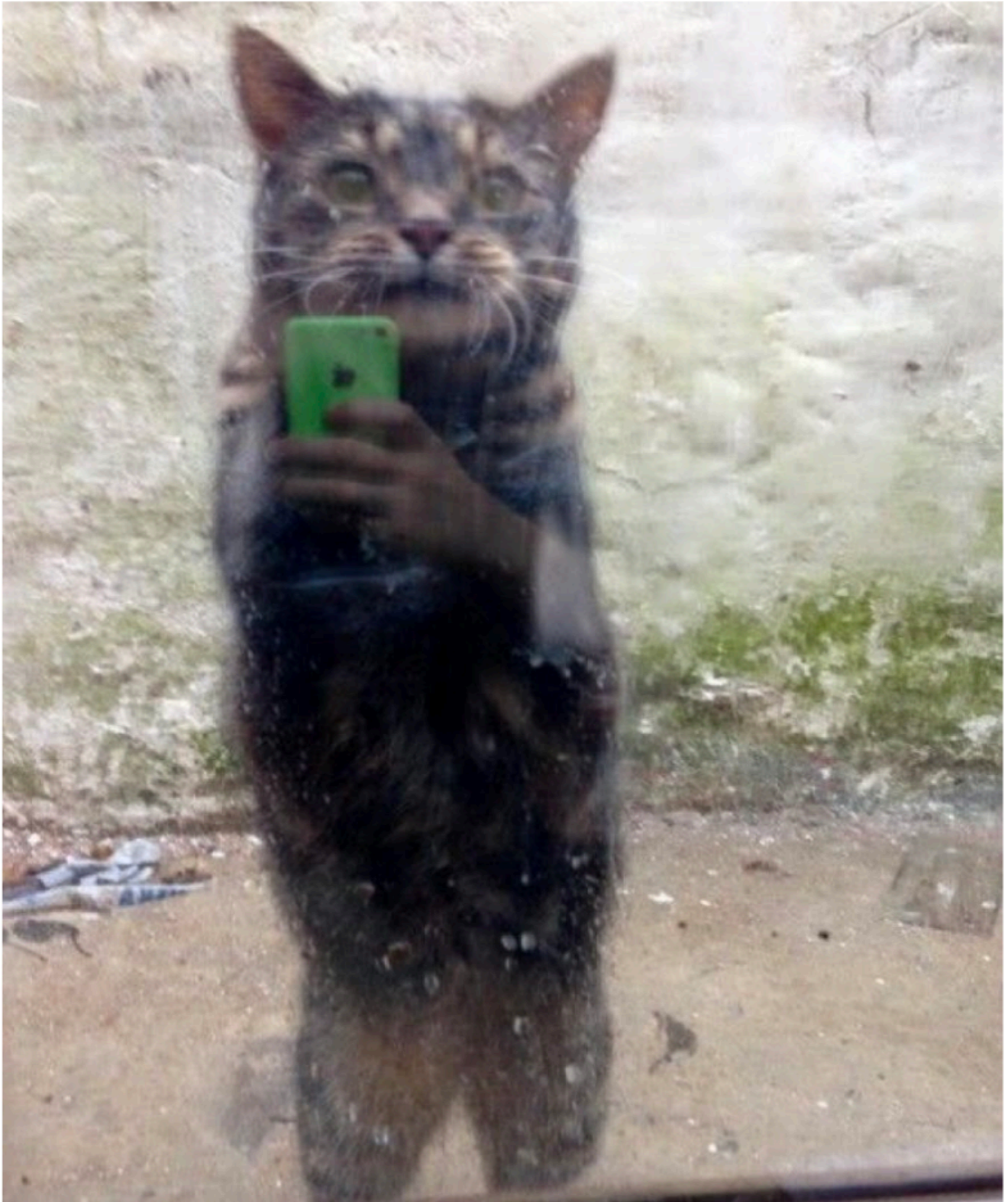


Display of poor image texture.





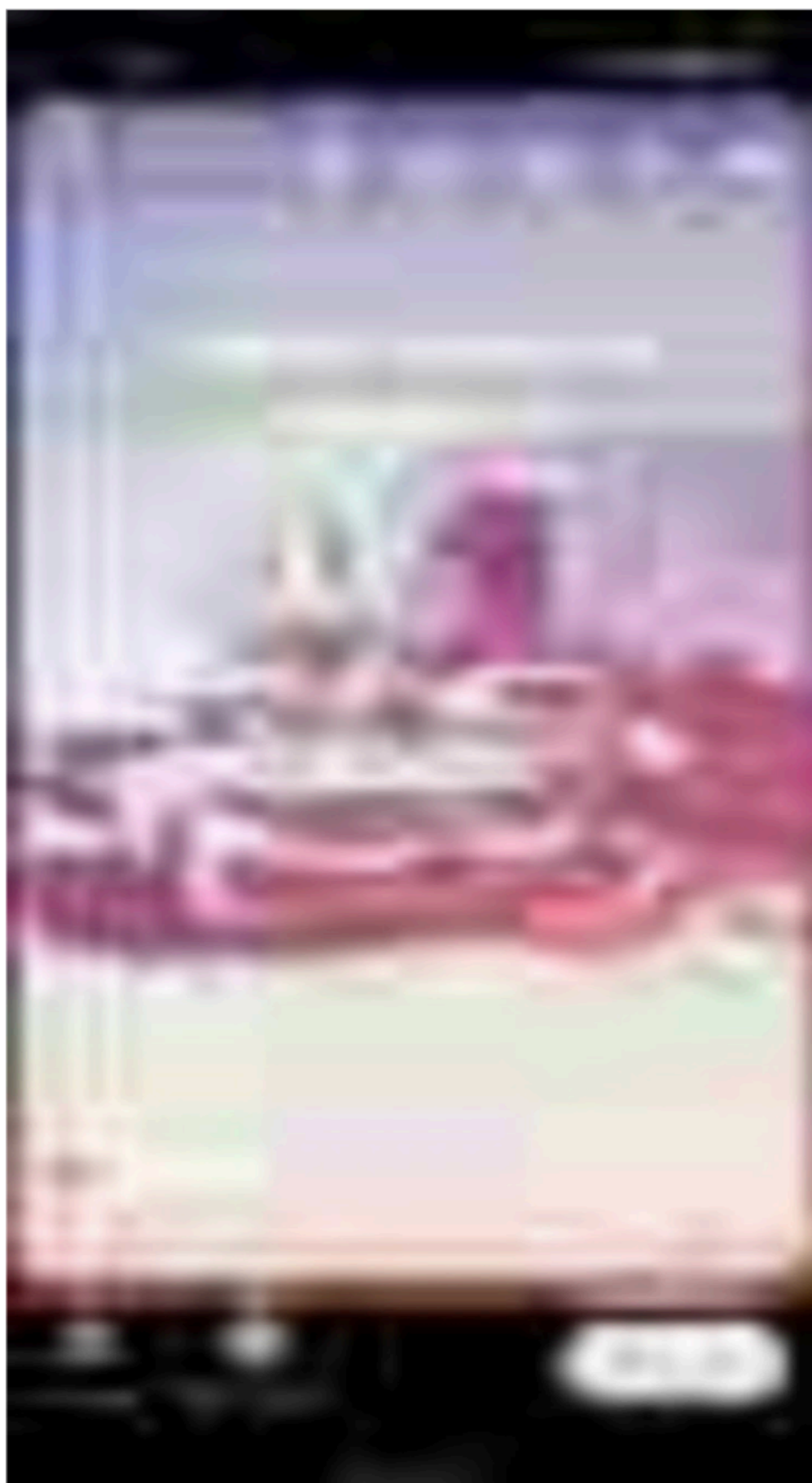
Whether you like it or not, images contain rhetoric.



Poor images yield new possibilities for abstraction..







A poor image references its own dissemination.









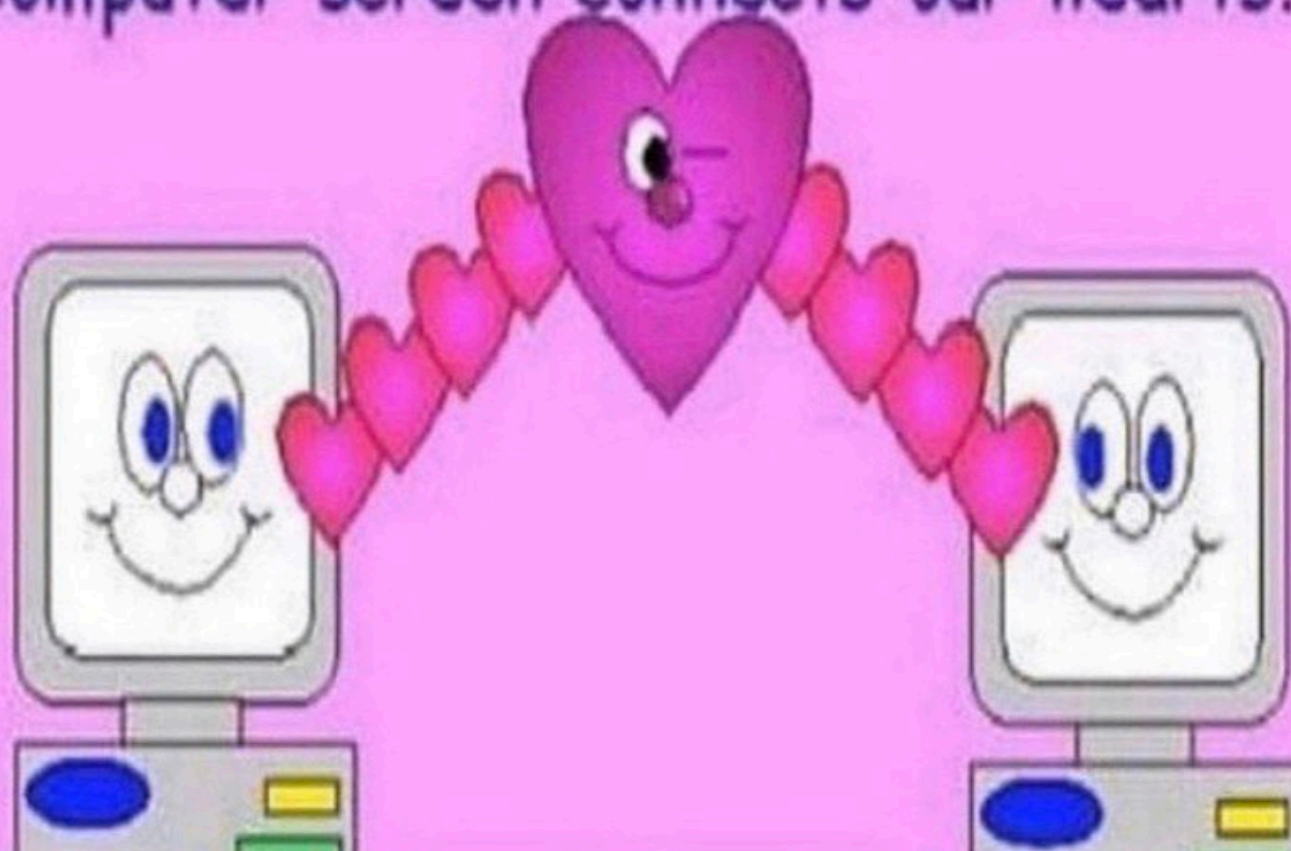
When shared in certain contexts, poor images can carry rhetoric that opposes their original rhetoric.



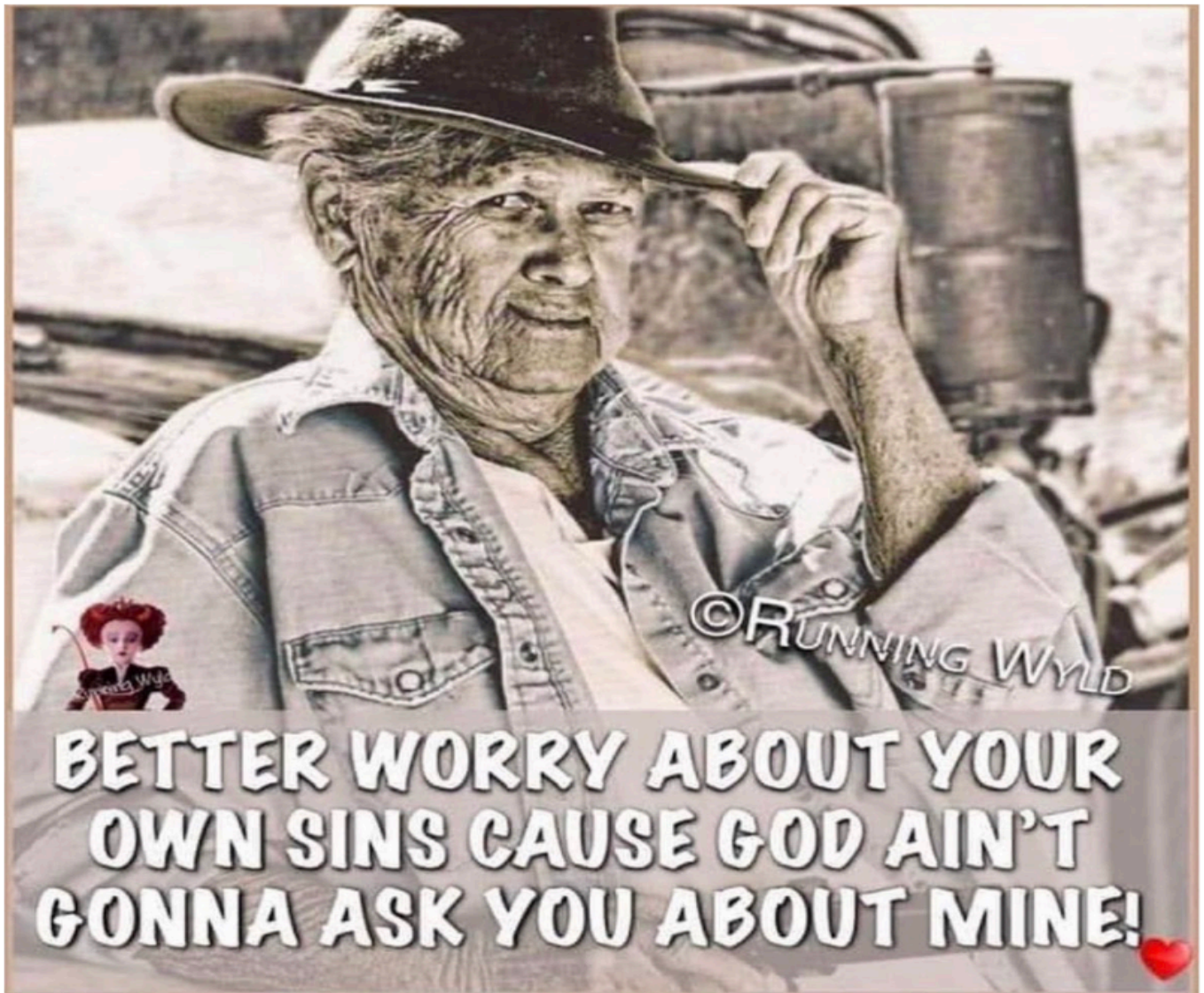




Even though we're miles apart a  
computer screen connects our hearts.





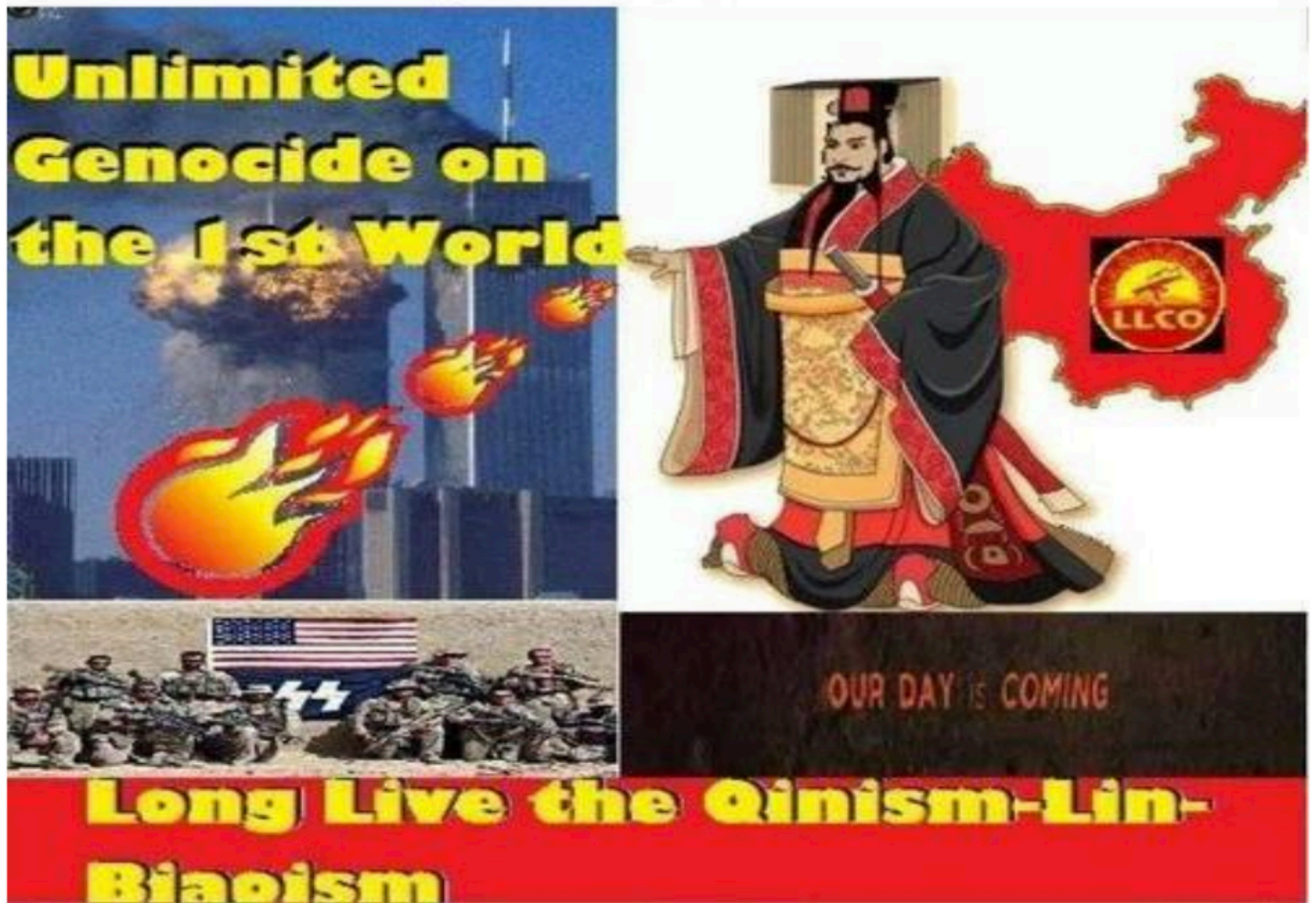


**BETTER WORRY ABOUT YOUR  
OWN SINS CAUSE GOD AIN'T  
GONNA ASK YOU ABOUT MINE!**

People interact with poor images daily, though they may not realize it.



A recent LLCO press release





**NERDS AND SEX MANIACS!  
COOPERATE AND DESTROY YOUR  
COMMON ADVERSARY, THE POLICEMEN!**

Some poor images aren't authored by humans at all. This image was created by a neural network.









Poor images can be used to share important information without relying on traditional dissemination structures.



Three 6 mafia bitter sweet symphony

7,193 views · Oct 20, 2018

187 DISLIKE SHARE DOWNLOAD SAVE ...

Poor imagery is not exclusive to visual media. Entire genres of music are premised on reference.



DJ Jeffree - Jungle Spliff (Side A) [1994]

23,175 views • Jan 30, 2014

👍 698 🗑 DISLIKE ➦ SHARE ⬇ DOWNLOAD 🎞 CLIP ➦ SAVE ...



In recent years, poor images have been used to share uplifting messages.







**Find more art from Tempest Britt:**

Tempest Britt on Youtube

Transgender Basketball Player on Spotify

The Poor Image Framework was peer reviewed by members of the Shenandoah Socialist Collective, as well as various artists and academics throughout the American east coast.

**From Alexander Logan:**

The poor image framework and the synthesization of it exists and has always existed to spread messages and rhetoric. This zine presents no exceptions. Living in the 21st century has created a new need and new ways of communication. Learning to interpret these signals is critical to both survival and thrival within your community. Through this zine, learn to decipher the images you see online, and see them as more than images. Take heed of these messages, take them into your life, and look at the instances in which you interact with the poor image. Create and analyze with the new knowledge you are presented everyday.

Learn to manufacture a reality instead of constantly consuming someone else's. Go from this piece with the imagery fresh in your mind and the pieces in place to decipher the poor image, and develop your own interpretation within your own online communities.



